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Polk County Agreement Establishes Lake Kissimmee Recreation Area

Plans to turn over 136 acres of lakefront property to Polk County and dedicate up to \$1 million for boat ramps and park facilities took a step forward today when the South Florida Water Management District Governing Board approved a partnership to build the lakefront park.

The agreement states that the South Florida Water Management District will give Polk County the 136-acre parcel in the southwest corner of Lake Kissimmee, and in the new fiscal year set aside \$1 million to construct of boat ramps for airboats, canoes and conventional power boats. The funds would also be used to construct restrooms and picnic pavilions. Once the park construction is complete, Polk County would take ownership and operate the park.

The Polk County Board of County Commissioners approved the agreement at its May 9 board meeting.

"This joint venture between the Board of County Commissioners and the SFWMD is another example of governmental entities working together for the benefit of its residents and visitors," said Polk County Commissioner Bob English. "With an airboat ramp, conventional boat ramp and kayak/canoe launch area on its southwest shoreline the new ramp will provide the most convenient public access directly to Lake Kissimmee. The board is pleased that this important project is moving along on schedule."

"This is great news for the sport angler, airboater and recreational kayaker who are looking for a place to launch a boat on one of Florida grandest lakes," said Harkley Thornton who represents Central Florida on the SFWMD Governing Board.

"The phenomenal work of the South Florida Water Management District's land acquisition team and the expertise of Polk County Parks and Recreation came together to provide this additional recreational benefit in Central Florida," he said.

Design work for the public-use facilities and boat ramps are underway and expected to be completed this summer. Construction of the facilities is expected to begin immediately after the October 1 beginning of the new fiscal year.

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The South Florida Water Management District is a regional, governmental agency that oversees the water resources in the southern half of the state – 16 counties from Orlando to the Keys. It is the oldest and largest of the state's five water management districts. The agency mission is to manage and protect water resources of the region by balancing and improving water quality, flood control, natural systems and water supply. A key initiative is cleanup and restoration of the Everglades.